

CAPTAIN GEORGE'S Penny Dreadful



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Her Song of Love

... The lyric innocence
of her loveliness turned in-
to a melody in
marble by the
hands of the
man who took
her heart.

Marlene DIETRICH

in the story of a woman's
passionate pilgrimage.

with
**BRIAN
AHERNE**

Alison
Skipworth

1933
"The

SONG OF SONGS"

A Paramount Picture

today

UPTOWN

TORONTO'S HOME OF GREAT PICTURES

A WEEKLY REVIEW

DON MILLER

NATIONAL PASTIME: Along with movie buffs, baseball fans are the most statistic-minded, perfectionist-oriented, hardest to please animal to be found anywhere. When the two pleasures are combined, it's practically a sure thing that neither contingent is going to be satisfied and will in one way or another pick the picture to pieces. So it was recently with *Don't Look Back*, a two-hour television feature purportedly dealing with the life and legend of Satchel Paige, who was a black man who could throw a baseball with the speed and accuracy of an M-1 rifle and who, when the speed was no longer there, would take his place on the pitcher's mound and proceed to outfox the opposition with a bewildering variety of nothin'.

Louis Gossett played Paige and was very good, catching Paige's shambling walk and loose-limbed dexterity. Gossett looked like a ballplayer, which is more than can be said for most movie actors, especially the ones who try to impersonate them. However, there were times, frequent times, throughout the narrative when one wondered if those involved in the production had ever seen a baseball game, much less indulged in research on the era at hand. Baseball fanatics may well curdle at the prospect of Augie Galan's name mispronounced, and the spectacle of an obviously right-handed pitcher being referred to several times as Lefty. All this within the opening ten minutes. There is no use trying to explain the intricacies of the game to outsiders, but to a partisan these slipshod errors are tantamount to heresy. Things didn't improve much thereafter, either. One got the feeling that, while the story was based on fact, if not completely factual, and the hard times encountered by the Negro ballplayers in what used to be a white-man's-only sport remains the stuff of powerful historic material still to be screened adequately, the makers of *Don't Look Back* missed out somewhere. There was no fun in it, no enjoyment of the game was evident, and since Satchel Paige had plenty of both in addition to his great talent for throwing a baseball, he was done an injustice.

There really hasn't been a completely satisfactory movie about baseball. The game is difficult to put on film, and there are lots of people who never will understand it or have any affection for it. Baseball movies usually fall into two categories, the sports biography and the sports fantasy. The biographies have used the same stencil: baseball-crazy kid grows to stardom, suffers physical or mental setback, returns to stardom with the aid of loving mate or perishes nobly. Best of this bunch is *The Pride of the Yankees*, with Gary Cooper as Lou Gehrig, largely because of Teresa Wright's radiant portrayal of Mrs. Gehrig.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

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BILL BLACK

THE HERO WAS A SERVICE MAN: Recently, CBS ran a five-part CBS Reports on America's preparedness in the event of a nuclear war. One of the questions raised, naturally, was: "Can America win?" However, the question should have been: "Can America win without John Wayne?"

Out of 158 films, Duke donned a uniform 23 times, excluding the Cavalry. He was variously a flier, a Marine, paratrooper, naval officer, army officer, and he even served a hitch as a captain in the German Merchant Marine! (The Sea Chase, 1955.)

His most notable forays would be, I think, Flying Tigers (42), Fighting Seabees (44), They Were Expendable (45), Sands of Iwo Jima (49), Flying Leathernecks (51), his all too brief stint in The Longest Day (62), and, though it was an unpopular film at the time, The Green Berets (68).

Over the years, in one branch of the service or another, he served it up to whoever his country's enemy happened to be at the time: Nazi or Nip, Commie or Cong, it didn't seem to matter much. Thirteen of the 23 war films were made after the war, only six during, and four before, and in one of these, he was actually a cameraman: I Cover the War, Universal, 1937, so that really shouldn't count, if you're a purist.

He was even a Roman Centurion, if we look only at uniforms, in George Stevens' The Greatest Story Ever Told (65), but hell, everybody except Oscar Homolka and Binnie Barnes was in that. It's a uniform, so let's call it 23-and-a-half.

Duke looked good in uniform. He had enormous presence anyway, a leather flying jacket or battle fatigues enhanced that tremendously. There were others who had this quality, if we can call it that: Errol Flynn, Randolph Scott, Aldo Ray, Frank Lovejoy, Lee Marvin, Bob Taylor ... they all looked comfortable, as though they belonged in the uniform. Others looked out of place, and I'm thinking here of people like Joseph Cotten in Since You Went Away (44) or Dana Andrews in The Purple Heart (44).

Hey, there's an idea -- we could go to the Russians and say: "Hey, guys, listen, we'd love to have a war with you, really we would ... but, well, Duke's just not available for this one ... and Flynn's with him ... um, Randy hasn't worked for years, and well, you understand?? Yes? No? Gum?"

It won't work, but it's worth a try.

DON MILLER continued

Of the baseball fantasies, It Happens Every Spring, with Ray Milland as a professor who invents a wood repellent and becomes a pitching ace incognito, is best because, despite some hideous technical mistakes, it fulfills the dreams of all sports-minded souls -- to be a hero. Milland also played in one that was fun entitled Rhubarb, H. Allen Smith's farce about a cat that inherits a team.

PETE HARRIS

MOVIE BIZ: If the box-office returns are any indication, the movies that people want to see these days are big-screen, mega-million-buck, live-action comic books. According to Daily Variety, gross U. S. box-office receipts for the week of June 24-30 were just over \$100 million, which broke a record of \$94 million set a week earlier. That's a lot of real money pouring through the box offices of America for movies such as Superman II and Raiders of the Lost Ark, and it's a trend I find disturbing.

There was a time when movie junk (I use the term affectionately) was relegated to Saturday matinees, third-class neighborhood houses, and, later on, drive-in theatres. A lot of that movie junk was aimed at the kiddie audience, which clasped it to its collective bosom, along with comic books, Big Little Books, indigestible penny candy, rainbow-hued soft drinks, pea shooters, secret decoders, and a million and one other irrelevant pieces of trivia. Those things, which adults were only vaguely aware of, formed the centre of the universe for a bunch of kids who, for much of their existence, lived in a dream world far removed from such real-life horrors as school, homework, the bully over on the next block, and Growing Up. It was all very comforting and reassuring, but what it was was junk.

Today, it's a different matter. National magazines do learned pieces on the sociological content of comic books, and movies like Raiders of the Lost Ark, which is just another junk movie done up in a multi-million-dollar gift wrapping, make the cover of Newsweek. Otherwise serious film reviewers do long, ponderous critiques of such films, devoting as much space, energy and attention as they'd give to something by Bergman or Fellini or Godard. Apparently there is no critical perspective or sense of relative values any more -- a criticism which applies equally to book reviewing, by the way -- and movies that deserve a paragraph or two at best as summer escapist entertainment are accorded the sort of significance that was once almost strictly reserved for serious directors like John Ford and Howard Hawks, and, later on, Martin Scorsese and Francis Ford Coppola.

Don't get me wrong -- I'm not one of those people who think that movies are a great untapped social force for change; they are much too manipulative on an emotional level ever to bring about the fundamental shift in human nature and attitudes that D.W. Griffith envisaged. But I do think that movies are healthiest when a cross-section is readily available to the film-going public -- if you want slapstick comedy, go to the Bijou; if you want a western, go to the Savoy; if you want a musical, go to the Ace; if you want a heavy proletarian drama, go to the Orpheum. It used to be like that, something for everybody. Today, a glance at the movie ads shows a preponderance of big-screen comic books. Occasionally, one can find an import like The Last Metro tucked away somewhere, but for the most part, it's pablum for the mind, and I think it's a situation that stinks.